

LEGATION BUILDINGS AT SEOUL, KOREA.

L E T T E R

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY,

TRANSMITTING

A COPY OF A COMMUNICATION FROM THE SECRETARY OF
STATE SUBMITTING AN ESTIMATE OF APPROPRIATION FOR
ERECTION OF LEGATION BUILDINGS AT SEOUL, KOREA.

JANUARY 15, 1902.—Referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs and ordered to
be printed.

TREASURY DEPARTMENT,
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY,
Washington, January 14, 1902.

SIR: I have the honor to transmit herewith for the consideration of Congress copy of a communication from the Secretary of State of the 11th instant, submitting an estimate of appropriation for the erection and furnishing of suitable buildings on ground belonging to this Government for the legation of the United States at Seoul, Korea, \$40,000.

Respectfully,

L. J. GAGE, *Secretary.*

The SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
Washington, January 11, 1902.

SIR: I have the honor to inclose herewith, for submission to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, with a view to its reference to the appropriate committee for its consideration in connection with the estimates for foreign intercourse for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1903, a copy of a memorandum prepared by Dr. H. N. Allen, minister of the United States to Korea, setting forth the need of new buildings for the legation at Seoul, on ground belonging to the Government of the United States.

In addition to the reasons given by Dr. Allen, there are political and

commercial considerations not touched upon by him why the United States should make as respectable a showing at the Korean capital as is made by any other government.

The amount asked for is not excessive, and I do not hesitate to recommend, as for the good of the public service, an appropriation of \$40,000, or so much thereof as may be necessary, for the erection and furnishing of suitable buildings for the legation of the United States at Seoul.

I have the honor to be, sir, your obedient servant,

JOHN HAY.

The SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY.

WASHINGTON, D. C., *January 6, 1902.*

SIR: I have the honor to hand you inclosed duplicate copies of a memorandum I have made relative to new buildings for the legation at Seoul, to cost \$25,000 to \$40,000.

I have the honor to be, sir, your obedient servant,

HORACE N. ALLEN,

United States Minister to Korea, on Leave.

Hon. JOHN HAY,
Secretary of State.

A memorandum re United States legation buildings, Seoul, Korea.

1. The United States owns the legation grounds and buildings in Seoul, comprising over three acres in the best locality, situated between the legations of France and Russia, and of England, and adjoining the Imperial Palace. The grounds cost the Government \$4,600, and could probably be sold now for \$25,000. A similar suitable site could not be had for \$25,000.

2. The buildings are of the old Korean style, and consist of many little Korean bungalows joined together and patched up by the substitution of glass for paper windows; brick wall for those of mud, wattle and plaster; and board for stone floors. They are all of one low story. Inside the rafters and beams that support the heavy tile roof are all exposed. This is no disadvantage as it gives a rather picturesque effect.

3. The buildings are naturally frail and expensive to keep in order. The danger from fire is considerable. The Emperor's library burned down in November last. It was but 9 feet in one place from the legation. The legation house was only saved by very great efforts on the part of the chargé d'affaires and the constable.

4. The legation house has a fair size dining room, 16 by 24 feet in size. It will hold fourteen guests at the table. The drawing room is 12 by 16 feet, and twelve people make it crowded. The kitchens are, unfortunately, at the front of the house and very disagreeable. The four bedrooms are satisfactory, except that they are right down on the ground and most unhealthful in the summer rainy season. Having barely escaped with my life after three months' run of severe malarial fever, I was compelled to build myself a summer house in the country. I do not stay at the legation at night during the summer any more.

In this connection I may add that the two ministers, after suffering greatly from malaria while residing in this house, died in America from what the physicians pronounced to be the effects of malaria contracted in Korea. Also, an official of the State Department, who spent ten days in the house during last summer, is now lying in a critical condition in Washington from malarial fever which his physicians say he contracted in Korea.^a

5. The secretary's house, though small, is newly built and quite satisfactory. It is on the high part of the legation ground.

6. The offices are in a building similar to the above. The main office and court room is 12 by 24 feet, 6½ feet high under the main beam. My own office is 8 by 12, with a ceiling 6 feet 6 inches high—I am 6 feet 2 inches tall without my hat. In this office, in a little antiquated safe and in wooden cupboards, are stored all the records covering the extensive American gold mines in Korea, and of the American Electric Company, which conducts the largest single electric plant in Asia, and is about to construct waterworks for Seoul. The only records of the property purchases and transfers of the three hundred Americans in Korea are kept in the record books in this office, together with records of their marriages, births, and deaths. Should the buildings burn down in the night, as did the Imperial library, these records would probably all be lost, and they could not be replaced.

7. Every other legation and consulate in Seoul is housed in fine foreign-built structures. Even the German and Japanese consulates are in handsome brick buildings that have cost not less than \$25,000 each. The Japanese are now replacing their present fine legation buildings by one of much greater pretensions that will probably cost \$100,000. The French legation is imposing, and the French Government purchased a château in France just to get its Louis XIV furniture for this house. The Russian legation is very extensive and imposing. Sixty people can easily be accommodated in those houses for dinner. The British legation is not so large as the Russian and French, but it is more massive.

Our own legation is really a disgrace to the United States. When I stand on the front step my silk hat reaches to the eaves. This property had to be purchased by the first minister, as there was no system of rentals in Korea. If we did not own it we could have a good legation erected for us on a long contract, to pay a monthly rental of four or five hundred dollars.

In repairing a defective beam I am getting an addition of 8 by 8 feet to the drawing-room, which will make the duty of dinner giving somewhat easier, but I have long since been compelled to give up any and all Fourth of July celebrations, since that would involve the entertainment of 200 to 300 people, all of whom would remain for at least two hours.

For the honor of our country a suitable legation building should be erected. The present moment is most opportune, as capable American architects and builders happen now to be building a palace for the Emperor, and the best available materials could be secured, as can

^aThe official of this Department mentioned by Dr. Allen as being critically ill of malarial fever contracted in Korea was Mr. Thomas T. Keller, an employee of this Department, who has since died.

also the best of terms, for the Americans are so mortified with their legation in Seoul that these people would willingly do their best at the most reasonable figure.

I think a suitable legation building could be erected for \$25,000, with \$10,000 for chancery, office, court room, jail, etc., and \$5,000 should be allowed for carpets, furnishings, etc.

HORACE N. ALLEN,
United States Minister to Korea.

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